

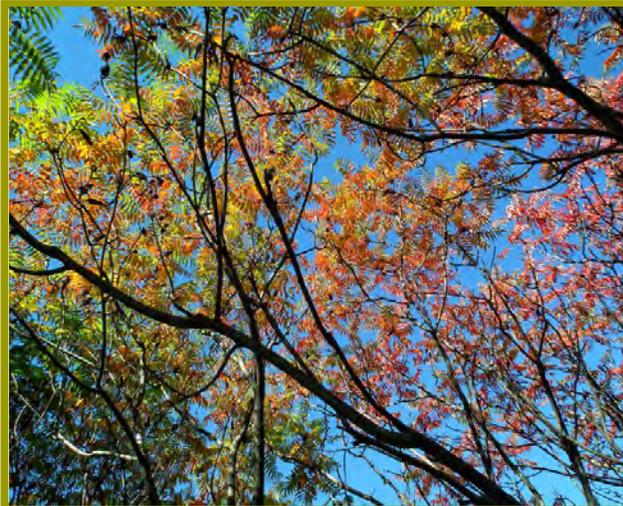


What's Growing On? The Fletcher Wildlife Garden Newsletter

www.ofnc.ca/fletcher

September - October 2013

Autumn arrives at the FWG



Autumn's touch on Sumac. Photo by France Thibodeau

The end of August brings the final weeks of summer and the beginning of fall. The sun doesn't shine as long, the days start to be a little cooler, and schools reopen their doors to hordes of students.

The months of September and October herald the fall bounty for wildlife at Fletcher. Berries ripen, plants produce seeds, and tree leaves begin their kaleidoscope of colourful changes. Days shorten, the sun's light doesn't seem as warm as it used to, and, as winter's chill approaches, more and more wildlife race to ready themselves for the tough months ahead.

Some gorge themselves in preparation for their long trek to their wintering grounds, while others busily stock up their larders, stashing food away in caches and hiding spots.

Other wildlife merely visit the garden for a few weeks, using Fletcher as a much-needed oasis, a place to rest and fuel up before continuing their long journey to warmer climates.

Like the wildlife it hosts, Fletcher is also bustling with work. Christine Hanrahan continues to keep our photo blog up to date with wonderful images taken by her and other talented photographers. Our volunteers work like busy bees, helping wherever their talents are needed.

And a new face has appeared. My name is France Thibodeau, and I've volunteered to put together and publish Fletcher's newsletters. I'm honoured to help out the garden and hope to be here for many newsletters to come.

Contact Us!

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Our Website: www.ofnc.ca/fletcher
Our Text Blog: fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com
Our Photo Blog: www.pbase.com/fwg/root
On Twitter: twitter.com/FletcherWildG
On Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/48901132335/>

Congratulations Renate!

Those of you who know Renate Sander-Regier will be pleased to hear that her University of Ottawa PhD thesis has been successfully completed and defended. Renate interviewed many FWG volunteers a couple of years ago for her research on the FWG and did extensive research into our files and related publications. Entitled "*The Power of a Small Green Place: A case study of Ottawa's Fletcher Wildlife Garden,*" Renate's thesis is available online for all to enjoy at - <http://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/en/handle/10393/24219>.



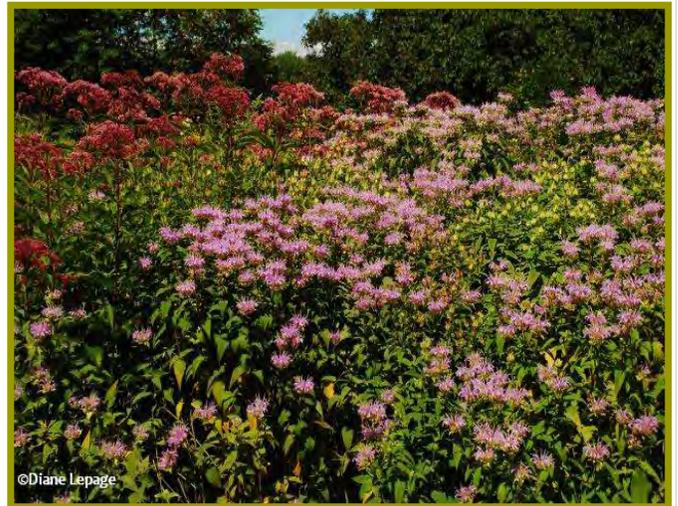
Congratulations, Renate!

Walking Through The Garden

Text by Renate Sander Regier. Photos by Diane Lepage

The walk I led at the beginning of August was very pleasant. The weather was lovely, and a dozen or so people attended. We essentially walked the Bill Holland Trail and talked about things we saw along the way as we passed through the different habitats. We started in the BYG while the light was still good, and we looked at what is growing in the various garden beds. I also told them about how the project evolved over the 20+ years of the project, and about the current activities and projects I am aware of.

We didn't have any particularly thrilling wildlife sightings, but there was lots in bloom. The group was very interested, and dismayed, at the extent of DSV all over the FWG. It brought them face-to-face with



Above: A lovely shot of Swamp Milkweed and Bee Balm in the Butterfly Meadow



the threat of that particular invasive species. I also pointed out Sophie Cardinal's bee boxes and talked very briefly about the bee monitoring she is doing (VERY briefly, because I don't know that much about her research). I also pointed out the "fairy rings" where no DSV is growing, and about the research being conducted on soil samples from those spots. We were all very impressed with the work happening in the Butterfly Meadow!

Left: Lobelia and Black Eyed Susan, also in the Butterfly Garden

Botanical Drawing in the Backyard Garden

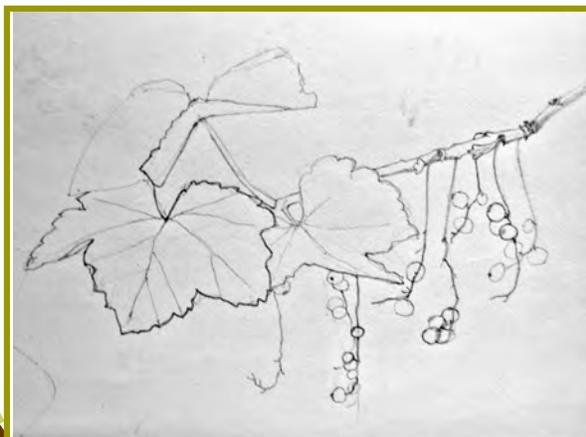
Text by Lynn Ovenden. Photos by Christine Hanrahan



The botanical artists, hard at work.

We proceeded with the season, from the geometry of daffodils and curvaceous opulence of magnolia, into the mysterious forms of iris and jack-in-the-pulpit, to intricately assembled whole-plant anatomies of currant, anemone, geranium, and prairie smoke. We drew a flower in bud, in full bloom and again in its mature seed-bearing form.

Kerri coaches students to observe a growing plant with care and then, with accuracy and beauty (ok... we tried... it was tough... some of us were definitely struggling with this) to render the essence of its shape, form, anatomy, texture, and movement in a drawing.



Above - the rare "botanical artist" flock, their attentions completely focused on their nature journals.

Kerri sent a gracious letter of thanks for the beauty and peace of the Backyard Garden, and conveyed the pleasure of her students in coming to the FWG to draw. As she said, "Everyone's knowledge of native plants expands with each visit — certainly one of the big pluses of drawing plants in their habitats."

Left - A sketch by one of the botanical artists of the Ribes sp. (currant) shrub by the woodland path in the Backyard Garden.

Mid-August at the FWG

\Text and Photos by Christine Hanrahan



Great Golden Digger *Spheg ichneumoneus*

Mid-afternoon at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, August 14th. A sunny and pleasant afternoon to be looking for things to photograph for the PBase Blog. My first sighting was of the *Spheg ichneumoneus*, the Great Golden Digger as it is sometimes called, nectaring on swamp milkweed. Its counterpart, the Great Black Digger, *S. pensylvanicus*, is often more numerous, but both are large and impressive.

Other insects found include numerous *Acutalis* Treehoppers, one of our smallest treehoppers, tiny little green and black insects, usually found on the stems of plants such as goldenrod. The large (for a planthopper), *Acanalonia bivittata*, is easily recognized. It is bright green, with reddish eyes and a dark stripe down its back. It also comes in a vivid pink form, something

I'm still hoping to see. The large swathe of *Monarda Fistulosa*, our beautiful lilac-coloured native species, in the butterfly meadow, is alive with bees and other nectaring insects, including a Hummingbird moth and a very tattered Silver-Spotted Skipper. The big *Bicyrtes* Sand Wasp, smaller Mud Daubing Wasps, Sweat Bees, Leaf-Cutter Bees, Ragweed Beetles, Goldenrod Leaf Beetles, the predatory larvae of Green Lacewings sometimes called aphid lions because of their propensity for feasting on aphids, Pennsylvania Leatherwings (soldier beetles), tiny Ragweed Fruit Flies, and a host of other insects can be found on the abundant flowering plants around the site.

In addition to the skipper, lots of Cabbage Whites, a few White Admirals, and several newly emerged Ringlets, the second generation in our area, were also seen.

Birds are vocal and active, with broods of young following the adults, calling and begging for food. House Wrens are especially vocal these days, as are Catbirds and Song Sparrows. Robins, Baltimore Orioles, Chipping Sparrows, Chickadees, Cardinals, Cedar Waxwings, and many other birds are very noticeable right now. While our Tree Swallows have long gone, Barn Swallows can still be found swooping over the garden. Shrubs such as elderberry and tartarian honeysuckle are providing much food for birds. Diane and I watched a Cedar Waxwing guzzling down the fruit of the honeysuckle as if he couldn't get enough!



Hummingbird Moth at *Monarda fistulosa*

It is fascinating to see how the vegetation changes from year to year. New plants appear in odd spots, others vanish. All the annuals found last year in the old field's rototilled section, have gone, but in their place scores of the biennial evening primrose (native plant), some big scotch (or bull) thistles, much beloved by insects, especially bees, and a variety of other species.

The native wild cucumber plant is sending its sprays of creamy white flowers up in various spots including in the old field area. There are lots of photos on the August 2013 Blog here: http://www.pbase.com/fwg/fwg_blog_aug_2013



Be sure to visit so you can also see the great photos submitted by Diane and France (who photographed a gorgeous giant swallowtail at the garden on August 15). Barry found the first giant swallowtail for our list, last year, and so this is the second year they've made their way to the garden.

To read more about the goings-on at Fletcher, be sure to visit our Text Blog at <http://fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com/>

Wild Cucumber Plant in bloom

Wildlife Notes - The Giant Ichneumon Wasp

Text by France Thibodeau. Photos by Christine Hanrahan

Intimidating? Yes. Frightening? Perhaps. Harmful? Not at all.

Despite appearances, this wasp is harmless. That stinger? It isn't a stinger. It's an ovipositor. In reality, this wasp can't sting. It's about as dangerous to humans as a butterfly is.

This wonderfully coloured female wasp uses that long, whip-like tail to drill into the wood of a tree or log, searching for the grubs of the Horntail Wasp. You see, Horntail Wasp grubs bore into the wood of dead, dying, or sick trees, and hide there while they grow and mature into adults.

In a somewhat gruesome relationship, the Giant Ichneumon needs those Horntail

Wasps. It uses that long tail to dig into the wood, searching for, and honing in on those grubs. Once she locates them, she uses her ovipositor to deposit an egg onto a Horntail Grub, then withdraws that long tail, searches out another hidden grub, and starts the process all over again.



It was a sad discovery when Christine found this unique wasp dead along the Bill Holland Trail.

The newly hatched Ichneumon larvae, fresh from the egg, waits, biding it's time, until the Horntail Grub is pupating. That gruesome relationship starts here, as the Ichneumon larvae promptly begins to eat its unwilling host. What eventually crawls out of that little hidey-hole is a mature Giant Ichneumon Wasp, and, if it's female, it searches out a mate, and then the life cycle begins all over again.

We'll never know what happened to the dead Giant Ichneumon that Christine found. But, we hope that it died of old age, and not by someone's fearful actions.

Left - a Pigeon Horntail Wasp, the Ichneumon's target

The Tuesday Invasive Species Group - Year Three

Text and photo by Barry Cottam



Geoff working hard getting rid of DSV. Who knew working on DSV could be this much fun?

The Tuesday Invasive Species Group (TISG) is about two thirds through its third year of dealing with the problem of invasive plant species at the FWG. While we have many invasives, including some, such as comfrey, that are becoming quite serious, our main focus continues to be on dog-strangling vine (DSV). The key difference this year, however, is a reassessment of our activities, the key question being whether we are doing more harm than good! This is a rather discouraging prospect, but two years worth of very hard work have produced no real results in regard to DSV. Any effects are pretty much cosmetic.

And so we've had a "taking stock" year. For a number of reasons, the group was reduced to the "Three Musketeers," Geoff, Hedrick and me, who have been together from the beginning. As coordinator, I decided not to recruit more volunteers or hold work bees as we have in the past until questions about our approach could be resolved. As well, the idea of clearing the entire FWG of DSV, always an idealistic goal, was abandoned in favour of more localized actions in support of efforts undertaken by others.

Much of our year to date has seen us working in the field north of the Ash Woods, where milkweeds were planted last year as a Monarch waystation activity, and in areas near the Butterfly Meadow to discourage the spread of DSV into that habitat. As well, we have cut invasives in the Birch Grove four times now – and no doubt not the last time, considering their rapid regrowth.

The Birch Grove was the scene of a major effort last fall by Renate's environmental studies class, with 60 students coming out over two evenings to clear out invasives and plant new birches. Besides DSV, the saplings are threatened by the FWG's only stand of Asian bittersweet, another twining, climbing vine capable of reaching into and above the canopy, choking trees on its way. The TISG cleared out the worst of this vine in the fall of 2011, but as with DSV, it comes back rapidly and can only be controlled through diligent efforts.

Again this year, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada agreed to mow the large field south of the pond. The large mowers they use can finish in an hour a job that takes my crew about three weeks with scythes. While we don't want to return to the days of mowing everything, we are looking at whether we can use technology such as brush cutters more effectively. DSV has been an issue at the FWG from the beginning and, while we can never expect to eradicate it, we do need to find more efficient and effective ways to control it.



Stewardship Rangers Help Out At The FWG

Text and photo by Barry Cottam

On Monday and Tuesday August 19 and 20, a small band of Stewardship Rangers descended on the FWG for some "heavy lifting." And did we have the job for them! Diane Lepage has been wanting to clear out and replant an "alcove" on the way to the Butterfly Meadow, a project that involved taking out invasives – dog-strangling vine (DSV), of course, and burdock – then digging and sifting the topsoil. Shrubs and saplings will be planted this fall. My own group had cut over this area in the spring as an early first step, but the invasives had returned with a vengeance.

The Rangers were up to the task. A summer employment program for 17 year olds, the Stewardship Youth Ranger program has been run by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for decades, with teams

located in a number of Ontario towns and cities. Our team came up from Kemptville each day, about an hour's drive. The team comprised four young men, Caleb, Jesse, Josh and Jack, with supervisors Stephanie McConkey on Monday and Jeff Ward on Tuesday. Diane and Barry were on hand as well on Monday and Barry returned on Tuesday. The lads were certainly used to working hard by this stage of the summer – our project kicked off their final week – and they tucked in with a will.

Monday morning was the most fun, as a number of dead trees needed to be taken out and sawed into pieces, invasives cut and removed and the ground cleared. When the digging started, the sifter came into play, and volunteers who have worked for the Wednesday Butterfly Meadow group know what that means! Every shovelful of dirt gets dumped onto the screen, which is then rocked back and forth on its stand, an action requiring two people. Fine, clean soil falls below and the roots, stones and other debris are dumped into a wagon to be hauled off for disposal. As one sifter-sized area is completed, the sifter is moved to the next and the process begins again. This is truly labour intensive, but Diane swears it's the only effective way to get rid of DSV. It took a day and a half to do the alcove – but someone dug up a large, ancient horseshoe, so maybe it will bring us luck and we'll never have to deal with DSV in that spot again!



The Rangers take a minute to admire the results of two days' hard work: fine, smooth soil free of DSV roots and ready for planting.



Upcoming Events

bug day!

When: Saturday, September 7th, 11 am to 3 pm

Where: Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Prince of Wales Drive between Dow's Lake and Baseline Rd., at Central Exp. Farm

Who: All ages

Cost: FREE!!!

Sponsored by the Entomological Society of Ontario
& The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club



Activities include:

Live insect zoo

Guided insect nature walks

Building insect collections

Cockroach races

Kids' insect crafts

Ask a bug expert

A DAY AT THE FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN FOR NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS

When: Sunday October 13th, from 10:00 a.m to 2:30 p.m.

Where: The Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretive Centre

Leader: Barry Cotham

If you went down to the woods today – what would YOU find? Come out to explore the FWG in all its fall glory with your camera. Whether you are into birds, insects, fungi or fall colours – or all of them – there is much to see at this time of year. The group will meet for brief introductions and orientation, then head out in all directions to explore Fletcher's various habitats til noon. We return to the IC to spend an hour choosing and preparing our photos / videos then spend a final hour sharing our work with the group. This will be a great opportunity to practice your photographic skills while learning more about natural history! If you are not a photographer but want to see the show, just turn up around 1:00 p.m.

More Upcoming Events

Friends of the Farm

25th Anniversary Celebration

Family Picnic

Saturday, September 14th, 2013

11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Admission by Donation



Come join the Friends of the Experimental Farm as we celebrate our 25th anniversary with a family picnic at the Farm. **Bring your own picnic lunch and blankets to sit on.**

Between **11:00 and Noon** there will be clowns, face painting, bubble making and paper airplane making as well as a colouring contest and races for the children.

And at **Noon**, cake and lemonade will be provided by the Friends of the Experimental Farm

At **11:00** a guided tour of the Arboretum will be available and from **Noon until 2:00** there will be container gardening demonstrations.

Local musicians will be performing **between 1:00 and 3:00** in the afternoon.

A raffle fundraiser, by donation, will be held in support of the Friends of the Experimental Farm



Ottawa Sustainability Tour

On September 14, the FWG is participating in the launch of the Ottawa Sustainability Tour, organized by the Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City Initiative and other local groups. We are one of ten sites chosen to match the ten themes of the Tour: Natural Capital, Sense of Place, Transportation, Energy, Food, Health, Recreation, Habitat, Design, and Waste.

Guess which theme we represent? You only get one try!

The Sustainability Tour is being kicked off in Vanier in the morning then participants can spend the day travelling to the various sites. We'll be keeping the IC open and offering brochures and trail maps, answering questions, and generally being helpful. Since we're 8th on the list, we're going to open the IC at noon then hang around for several hours. For further information, visit our website or check out OBEC at <http://obec-evbo.ca/>.

What's New? Additions To Our FWG Wildlife Lists

text and photos by Christine Hanrahan



Above: A Treehopper - *Smilia camelus*

Each year at the FWG, we add new species to our various inventory lists. Infrequently, it might be a new bird or plant, but most often it is insects. This is not surprising, for of all the thousands of insects found in the region, we've only recorded a few hundred species. We have a long way to go!

During 2013 and up to the date of writing (late August), we added one new bird species, a blue-gray gnatcatcher. This was found on May 7 near the Butterfly Meadow. It sang for about five minutes, put on quite a show, and then vanished. This species is still relatively rare in the Ottawa region, but occasionally they show up, and once even nested, although not at the FWG.

The world of insects is more vast, as noted and, therefore, new additions are a given. We keep three insect lists: one for butterflies, one for moths, and one for all the rest of the insect world. We also keep a list of spiders found at the garden.

No new butterfly species were found this year, but a number of new moths were added to our inventory list. Of those, the two clear-winged moths (Sesiidae family) are certainly the most intriguing: Virginia creeper clearwing moth and raspberry cane borer moth. Neither looks remotely like a moth, and the latter, like many of the clearwings, is a perfect wasp mimic (until you look closely). While looking for moths, we often also find other insects that are attracted to the lights.

Aside from the two clearwings, other additions to the moth list are not included below. This is because they are still being identified and sorted by Diane Lepage — not a quick process when it comes to moths, so you'll have to wait for the next newsletter to see what goodies have been added. Dr. Sophie Cardinal, who maintains the bee boxes you might have seen at the FWG, provided a list of bee species she has found, some of which were new additions for our list.

New insects observed in 2013:

An asterisk (*) indicates a non-native species.

Saddled Leafhopper - *Colladonus clitellarius*
 Scentsless Plant Bug - *Harmostes reflexulus*
 Treehopper - *Smilia camelus*
 Fire-coloured Beetle - *Pedilus sp.*
 Leaf Beetle - *Microrhopala excavata*
 Broad-nosed weevil - *Otiorhynchus raucus* *
 False Darkling Beetle - *Dircaea liturata*
 Soft-winged Flower Beetle - *Anthocomus sp.* *
 Hairy Fungus Beetle - *Mycetophagus sp.*
 Scarab Beetle - *Dichelonyx sp.*
 Metallic Wood-boring Beetle - *Agrilus cyanescens*
 Ground Beetle - *Calleida punctata*
 Small Fleck-winged Snipe Fly - *Rhagio lineola*
 Bee Fly - *Exoprosopa sp.*
 Midge - *Stenochironomus hilaris*
 Horse Fly - *Tabanus atratus*
 Blue Mud Dauber wasp - *Chalybion californicum*
 Plasterer Bee - *Hylaeus sp.*

Sweat Bee - *Augochlorella sp.*
 Cuckoo Leafcutter Bee - *Coelioxys sp.*
 Leafcutter Bee - *Hoplitis sp.*
 Small carpenter bee - *Ceratina sp.*



A Metallic wood-boring beetle - *Agrilus cyanescens*

Nature Notes: Plant of the Month



FWG, Christine Hanrahan

A tall, robust perennial, the Canada Goldenrod flowers (the most common species at the FWG) abundantly at Fletcher, and their striking yellow blooms can be seen in great swathes across the site. A food source for many insects, from butterflies to beetles, these flowers, which bloom from August to October, are usually buzzing with activity. Afterwards, the seeds they produce are a bounty for birds such as sparrows and finches.

Often mistaken for ragweed, these wildflowers have received a bad rap. What many don't realize is that Goldenrod doesn't spread pollen through the air, unlike many other banes of hayfever sufferers. Instead, like many other flowering plants, they rely on insects to pollinate them.

Text by France Thibodeau. Photo by Christine Hanrahan

Nature Notes: Bird of the Month

A flash of brilliant green, a blur of movement, this is the Ruby Throated Hummingbird. This tiny bird excels at flitting around the garden at a speed that outwits many a photographer. In the fall, these birds can be spotted hovering in front of brightly coloured flowers, drinking the energy rich nectar they need to fuel their high energy bodies before darting off to their next nectar source. The wide variety of flowers at the FWG make it a perfect attraction for these birds, so enjoy them while they're around; by early fall, they're bound for their wintering grounds in Central America.

Text by France Thibodeau. Photo by Christine Hanrahan.



©Christine Hanrahan

Nature Notes: Bug of the Month



©Diane Lepage

These gnarly looking Ambush Bugs appear at the Garden in late July, and are soon found on almost all types of flowers. As their name suggests, they lie in wait, motionless, patiently biding their time until an insect lands within their reach. Bees, flies, and other prey stand little chance once they're snared by this predator.

Look for these unique insects on wildflowers, and especially on goldenrod in late summer and early fall. They're slow moving, which makes them perfect for photography.

Text by France Thibodeau. Photo by Diane Lepage

See more on our PHOTOBLOG: www.pbbase.com/fwg/!